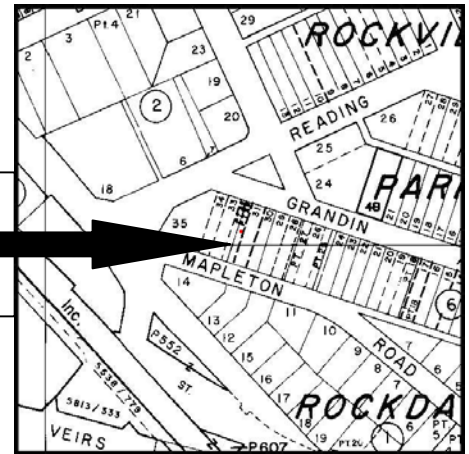


**CITY OF ROCKVILLE HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
HISTORIC DESIGNATION EVALUATION
STAFF ANALYSIS
701 Grandin Avenue**



**August 20, 2002
MEETING NO. 8-02**

701 Grandin Avenue



SUBJECT: The Hipsley-Thompson House, 701 Grandin Avenue

LOCATION: Parts lots 32, 33, 34, Block 6, Rockville Park

SIZE: 8,375 square feet

OWNER: Cameron H. and Dana Moffett

MEETING DATE: 7/16/02, continued to 8/20/02

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends that 701 Grandin Avenue be found eligible for designation as a single site (Landmark) Rockville Historic District in accordance with the adopted criteria.

EVALUATION PROCESS

Notices of the HDC evaluation were sent via first class mail to adjacent and confronting property owners, Citizen's Associations and other interested parties on July 10, 2002. The agenda for the evaluation meeting was also posted on the city's web page and the property was posted.

BACKGROUND

The house at 701 Grandin was nominated for historic designation by the current owners, Cameron and Dana Moffett. The Maryland Historical Trust Historic Site Inventory Form (MHT form) was prepared by consultant Gail Littlefield who wrote: The Hipsley-Thompson House is significant as part of the urban growth of Rockville. Unlike earlier subdivisions around the Courthouse, Rockville Park was oriented to the B & O Railroad's Rockville Station and the commercial opportunities there. It represents the evolution of Rockville from a county seat in an agricultural area to a railroad hub. Architecturally, the Hipsley-Thompson House represents a popular vernacular house form of the late nineteenth century. It is one of several intact survivors of the first generation of houses in Rockville Park. It has had several owners, representing the middle-class occupations and activities engaged in by Rockville citizens during the town's growth in the twentieth century. Like other older properties in Rockville Park, the 701 Grandin tract was subdivided, along with the 709 tract, making way for new infill houses in the mid to late twentieth century. Two families, the Hipsleys and the Thompson/Tolberts occupied the house for

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long periods of time. The house sits across Reading Avenue from the Kingdon Sisters' House and the Carey and Hattie Kingdon House (300 Reading), both on the City of Rockville list of historic sites.

The house is a vernacular three-bay by two-bay Gothic-revival style wood frame 2-1/2 -story house. It has a symmetrical front façade, a window in each of the prominent front and two side gables, a front-gabled full-width one-story front porch and a one-story projecting bay on the north side. Indirect evidence indicates a construction date of around 1894 for the Hipsley-Thompson House. It is almost identical to the house at 709 Grandin, which was described in the Sentinel of 1893 as "a commodious dwelling with 8 large rooms, double hall, bathroom, ...ornamented with a wide verandah. ...to be completed by Sept 1."¹ The style of the house is consistent with this late nineteenth century date.

William and Maude Bean sold 5 lots, 30 through 34, to Harry C. and Pattie S. Hipsley in 1918, taking back a note for \$2700.² The Hipsleys held all five lots of the property until 1951.

Harry C. Hipsley was born in 1866 and died in 1949, with burial at Mt. Carmel Cemetery.³ Pattie S. (Price) Hipsley was born at Etchison, Montgomery County, in 1861. She moved out of 701 Grandin to live with a son and daughter-in-law in Washington in 1954, where she died in 1956 at age 95. She had four sons. She was known for her butterfly quilts, one of which she was working on for a great grandson the week before she died. She is also buried at Mt. Carmel Cemetery.⁴

In 1951, Pattie S. Hipsley, widow, sold 701 Grandin with lots 30-34 to Willis and Beulah Thompson. The house was mortgaged for \$6000.⁵ Beulah Thompson died prior to 1974, when Willis Thompson deeded "part of the land described in a deed from Pattie S. Hipsley", lots 33, 34, and 15 feet of lot 32 "full depth", to himself and Virginia G. Thompson, his second wife.⁶ Apparently Willis and Beulah Thompson subdivided their 5 lots into two 2- ½ lot parcels. The Thompsons built the house at 705 for their son and daughter-in-law.⁷ Willis Thompson died February 15, 1980, followed by Virginia in 1984.⁸

During the time the Thompsons lived in 701 it was divided into an upstairs and downstairs apartment, with access from an enclosed foyer and staircase. A second kitchen was installed upstairs. Mr. Thompson also removed rotten wood columns from the porch and replaced them with current iron ones and poured the concrete porch floor.⁹ One of Virginia Thompson's daughters, Sharon L Tolbert, and her husband Earl, bought the property from Virginia Thompson's estate.¹⁰ The Tolberts lived in 701 as a single-family house, and removed the upstairs kitchen. Mr. Tolbert was a Rockville firefighter, who retired on disability. According to the tax assessor's worksheet, the house suffered about \$50,000 damage from fire

¹ Quoted in Peerless Rockville's Progressive Dinner House Tour program, 5/18/2002, for which 709 provided the soup and salad.

² Montgomery County Land Record 274/243 (11/6/1918).

³ Montgomery County Historical Society (MCHS) cemetery file.

⁴ MCHS biography vertical files.

⁵ Land Records 1585/116, 1585/117 (10/11/51).

⁶ Land Records 4549/345 (7/11/74).

⁷ Telephone interview with Dana Moffett, current owner, 7/1/02, by Gail Littlefield.

⁸ See Land record 6749/592 (5/31/1985); MCHS obituary files.

⁹ Moffett interview.

¹⁰ Land Record 7649/592 (5/31/1985).

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in the summer of 1998.¹¹ The Tolberts sold the house to the present owners, Cameron H. and Dana J. Moffett in February 2002.¹²

SUMMARIES OF TESTIMONY ON 701 GRANDIN ON JULY 16, 2002:

Forest Mills of 730 Grandin Avenue is currently renovating the house for his daughter and son-in-law. He said that the property included a stable and carriage house in the rear until the 1950s and confirmed that they had uncovered horseshoes in the rear yard. He said that he has completely renovated the interior. The house has asbestos shingles which cover the original German lap siding, and he is still considering whether to try to uncover it, not knowing its condition, or to cover the asbestos shingles with lap siding that would look like the original. Mr. Mills said that the house is in very good structural condition. The house had been damaged by fire and the City, through its housing rehabilitation program, spent \$25,000 to repair it. The owners repaid the City out of sale proceeds when the property was sold to the current owners.

Commissioner Broadhurst said that he lives in the same neighborhood and had observed this house for a long time. He said that this house looked like a hopeless case for a long time and that he was very happy to see it coming back. He noted that the house has some significant neighbors and there are great opportunities and potential for it. He congratulated Mr. Mills for the renovation work he is doing and encouraged him to expose the original siding as opposed to covering it with new material, if possible.

Eileen McGuckian, representing Peerless Rockville, said that this house represents residential construction after the railroad came to Rockville. She said Peerless is delighted by the work that is being done on the house and looks forward to seeing what is underneath the siding, noting that most people find the original covered-up siding to be in good condition.

No one spoke in opposition to designation. No additional comments were submitted prior to the closing of the record at the close of business on August 1, 2002.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION:

Staff concurs with the nominators and letter of support from Peerless Rockville that 701 Grandin Avenue meets the criteria for designation as a single site historic district by the City of Rockville. Staff found that it is significant to the City of Rockville in that its history demonstrates the transition of Rockville from an agricultural town to a suburban railroad town. It is a typical example of a middle-class late 19th Century house and one of only a few remaining original houses in Rockville Park.

¹¹ According to Dana Moffett, Moffett interview.

¹² Land Record 20540/592 (2/12/2002).